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Information from Forest Service and Bureau of Plant Industry.

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I wonder if you'd be very much put out today if I said nothing at all about cooking or sewing or the usual household chores -- if I simply talked about Christmas trees and holly and growing greens and blooming things generally as decorations for the house at Christmastide. I hope you'll be interested in some of the facts about Christmas trees and holly that come from the horticulturists and the foresters of the Department of Agriculture.

So then, we will talk over a few of the recent announcements from these people. The foresters tell us that this year the Christmas trees cut from the national forests will carry red tags certifying that they were cut without harming the stand of timber. The Forest Service supervises the cutting of the Christmas trees from the young growth and sees to it that they are taken from the thick stands which need to be thinned anyway.

More and more farmers and other people who own land devoted to growing pine trees are following the same methods of protecting the forests of the future when they cut Christmas trees. And there is growing up a specialized business of growing Christmas trees as a regular crop. All of which means that nationally we are managing our forest lands more sensibly.

Another sign of the times indicating that we are giving more thought to our natural resources is the greater care being taken to protect holly in the East and South from the depredations of well-intentioned but thoughtless people who used to slash beautiful old holly trees and sturdy young holly growth all to pieces in order to get a few armloads of Christmas greens.

But the fact still remains that the native holly is in more danger than any other of our native trees of becoming extinct. If it does, extensive cutting for market and for personal use will be responsible. Holly seeds take two years to germinate. After they do germinate it will be at least 12 or 15 years before the plant is big enough to provide very much of a harvest of Christmas greens. So you can see that it is having a hard time to keep up with the inroads made upon it every year.

Holly bushes are no longer seen along the roadsides in the Northeastern part of the United States. Also you may have noticed that much of the holly on the market in recent years has lacked the colorful berries. The berries have been missing, not because of some peculiarities in the last few growing seasons, but because people cutting holly for their own use and for sale have naturally taken the female holly trees, the only ones that produce berries. They have left the male trees to furnish most of the present day stock for the Christmas market.



Well, it's encouraging to know that more people are realizing that in order to perpetuate this beautiful and valuable tree, which grows around the Atlantic and Gulf Coast section from Massachusetts to Florida, and from Florida to Texas, and in the Mississippi River Valley section from the latitude of southern Indiana on to the Gulf Coast — in order to make sure that this tree will not disappear from our landscape, we must conserve the remaining supply and also must grow holly. Recently the horticulturists have found a way to root the cuttings of holly so that growers don't have to depend upon seedlings to start holly plantations. Starting holly by rooting cuttings also has the further advantage of enabling the grower to make sure that he is planting the female trees - the ones that produce the bright berries.

As more holly cuttings are propagated in the future, it should be possible for more people to have live Christmas holly in the house -- holly growing in flower pots or jardinieres. In the sections where holly grows, these potted holly plants can be set outside in the planting season just as is often done now with live Christmas trees.

Which reminds me of a suggestion that W.R.B. our good friend and adviser on both practical and ornamental gardening always makes to us at Christmastide each year. This is the suggestion, that if possible, you get a growing Christmas tree for use in the house. W.R.B. says he goes to a nursery, gets a nurseryman to dig a spruce or fir with a ball of earth around its roots, packs the earth in a box or tub, and uses this live tree for the chief indoor decoration of his house at the Christmas season. He keeps the tree well watered and as cool as possible. After Christmas he gives the tree the needed protection to keep it going till the transplanting season, and then -- at the transplanting season -- sets it out in the shrubbery border.

Now while we are talking of some of the facts about Christmas trees and holly as we have had them from the foresters and horticulturists of the Department of Agriculture, we of course can not overlook giving the annual reminder to guard against Christmas tree fires. I suppose hardly anybody who has electric service in his house burns candles on Christmas trees any more. Fire prevention engineers tell us that candles shouldn't be permitted on Christmas trees, and the electric light people have pretty well conquered that problem. The fire prevention engineers tell us further that the thoughtful, careful person will not use paper, cotton, or similar inflammable material that adds to the fire hazards around the home as Christmas tree decorations.

And with that final fact about Christmas trees, I say good-bye until this time tomorrow morning when we will talk about A Special Christmas Menu.

